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Examination session (May or November)

MAY

Year

2013

Diploma Programme subject in which this extended essay is registered: English B

(For an extended essay in the area of languages, state the language and whether it is group 1 or group 2.)

Title of the extended essay: Assess the language used in
Political Party advertisement in the UK.

Candidate's declaration

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The extended essay I am submitting is my own work (apart from guidance allowed by the International Baccalaureate).

I have acknowledged each use of the words, graphics or ideas of another person, whether written, oral or visual.

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Comments

Please comment, as appropriate, on the candidate's performance, the context in which the candidate undertook the research for the extended essay, any difficulties encountered and how these were overcome (see page 13 of the extended essay guide). The concluding interview (viva voce) may provide useful information. These comments can help the examiner award a level for criterion K (holistic judgment). Do not comment on any adverse personal circumstances that may have affected the candidate. If the amount of time spent with the candidate was zero, you must explain this, in particular how it was then possible to authenticate the essay as the candidate's own work. You may attach an additional sheet if there is insufficient space here.

had a very difficult task ahead of her when deciding upon the topic of investigation.

Spent an extensive amount of time researching her essay in an attempt to find sources that analyse language. The essay is well written and utilises actual billboard campaign posters as part of her analysis which I feel was very brave of her.

was a diligent student who always kept to the deadlines and used her supervisee time very well.

I have read the final version of the extended essay that will be submitted to the examiner.

To the best of my knowledge, the extended essay is the authentic work of the candidate.

I spent 5 hours with the candidate discussing the progress of the extended essay.

Supervisor's signature:

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Assessment form (for examiner use only)

		Achievement level		
		First examiner	maximum	Second examiner
Assessment criteria	A research question	2	2	
	B introduction	2	2	
	C investigation	3	4	
	D knowledge and understanding	3	4	
	E reasoned argument	3	4	
	F analysis and evaluation	2	4	
	G use of subject language	4	4	
	H conclusion	1	2	
	I formal presentation	4	4	
	J abstract	2	2	
	K holistic judgment	3	4	

Total out of 36

Name:

Session Number:

Subject: Extended Essay

Session: May 2013

Word Count: 3916

Supervisor:

Assess the language used in political party advertisements in the UK?

Abstract:

The research carried out in this Extended Essay was based upon the ‘Assess *the language used in political party advertisements in the UK?*’ The research aimed to analyse the language used in political advertising campaigns, primarily billboard adverts to ascertain as to whether a specific type of language is used when political parties attempt to get their message across. The research method used was linguistic analysis of the subjective nature of political billboard campaigns. This involved using analysis techniques associated with psychological and sociological research in order to deconstruct the language used.

The appendix provided in this essay highlights the specific billboard campaigns used in the analysis process. The findings from the research were as follows: United Kingdom political billboard adverts significantly employ negative language which attempts to discredit political party rivals, equally and in some cases more than positive language used to promote ones own party. This is a distinct difference to the way commercial advertisements operate which consistently employ positive language when engaging in product placement. The analysis techniques identified significant use of negative play on words to create anxiety in the electorate about opposition parties.

The conclusion states that United Kingdom political parties use very complex forms of language communication, however managing to achieve this in as few words as possible in order to keep the message kept in the electorate thoughts in run ups to general elections.

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Introduction:

The focus of this extended essay is to evaluate the question *Assess the language used in 'political party advertisements in the UK?* In order to fully analyze the question a consideration will be made of a range of important concepts associated with it.

In order to carry out this essay the assignment will refer to a range of sources, texts, documents and pieces of research. Both primary and secondary sources will be used in order to reach a more valid and reliable conclusion. The rationale for this assignment is to ascertain as to whether there is a specific use of Anglophonic language in party political advertising.

Thesis:

Political parties use a specific language in their advertising campaigns. Their aim is to have their candidates elected to power. For that to happen they encourage people by using different subjective language approaches to get people vote for them. Extensive revenue is spent on political advertising each year. As far as the language is concerned, specific figures of speech are used in order to manipulate the electorate, In the UK the situation is very notable. The number of advertisements increases drastically during elections and different methods are used such as brochures, commercials and billboard posters in order to make the political party or its leader more appealing to the masses.

How political adverts work: an analysis:

Goddard (1998) suggests that in the contemporary world we have become so familiar with advertisements that it really does not make us think what an advert is. She points out that the word advertisement comes from the Latin 'advertere', which means 'to turn towards' and also that the advertisement is a way of communication and it can be categorized as a language. What is more, Goddard argues that although adverts are a means by which our attention is drawn in a certain direction we tend to make the wrong classification regarding what is and what is not an advert.

Definition:

Jabber (2010) gives a definition of the process advertising as "*an act of a paid, impersonal spread of products and ideas.*"¹ He also suggests that this is a great way to make people familiar with what is advertised due to the fact that it is presented to a large audience. What is more, a positive side to advertising is the awareness that is spread and it is a way of introducing and making a new brand recognizable. However, Jabber suggests that there are some negative aspects of advertising as it is non-personal because it does not allow the customer to ask questions and due to this the sales may be restricted.

Since there are different products and ideas advertised, there are different targets and the aims for each are different. For example if a company sells sports cars, its target will most probably be a person who has interest in this area and the language in the advert will stress on the importance of why we should purchase this product and how we are going to benefit from it. As opposed a cosmetic company who wish to release a new product, the adverts focus to will be most likely be directed at women who are not happy with the product they are using now.

¹ Jabber (2010) p463

However when it comes to the advertising of ideas, political adverts are of great interest due to their complex nature. A political party has two objectives in an advertising campaign; 1) Create trust in the voters and 2) discredit the opposition political parties. This can be accomplished by promising changes from which the electorate will benefit, in relation to other political parties manifestos

The Psychology of the Language of Advertising:

Before discussing the specificity of language used in political advertisements further research as to why adverts are so effective and widely used will be made. Therefore an analysis of the psychology of advertising will be considered. Jakštien (2008) argues that one of the most influential aspects of the advertising is the psychological impact of an advert and most of the companies pay extra attention to the different way of presenting a certain information. When an advert is created two main processes that take place in the human brain are considered – the cognitive and the psycho process. The first process and the most important refer to the senses, the reasoning, the language and the perception. Advertisers should combine all of them to achieve a successful result. An advert should be visually appealing so as to attract the customer's attention and make the product look more desirable. That means that more vibrant colours and different type of letter sizes should be present in the advert. Even though the visual perception is one of the most important aspects of advert, senses such as hearing are of great important as well. Jakštien states that *“it is obvious that advertising affects the customer by the cognitive aspect. Senses are one of the most important aspects of impact; it is the process of primary cognition. The main goal of advertising is to evoke the feeling, in other words, it demonstrates how the customer is going to feel after acquiring one or another*

product.”² Additional she adds referring to Jokubauskas (2007) *“if the ad evokes the feelings not only directly related to it, but also additional (both positive and negative) ones, we can state that the advertiser was successful in distinguishing the merchandise and this will affect the customer’s decision.”*³

Another psychological process that advertisers try to influence is the psycho process, which refers to the motivation, perception, learning and memory. Motivation is key because most adverts promise improvement and people who have suffered or are in desperate need of this product are more likely to go and place a vote or buy the advertised subject. In relation to memory, people tend to buy things that they are familiar with and often the products that are most common are the once that are advertised the most. Therefore if an advert is seen regularly in different households, people will turn to the product that they are used to see the most.

By applying the psychological concept to political advertising Lapsanska (2006) argues *“often the language techniques used in political advertisements resembles the ones used in poetic texts as many mnemotechnical effects are used. This almost guarantees that the person will perceive the information more precisely and will recall it at time of need.”*⁴

Some of this mnemotechnical effects are rhythm, rhyme, alliteration and assonance. In order to have a better understanding of how these devices an explanation to each will be given. Lapsanska provides explanation to what is rhyme as she mentions that this poetic devise is *“characterized as a process of modeling words that have a similar sound.”*⁵ She points out that this refers only to sounds and can be often found in slogans, headlines and jingles. The next mnemonic device that is used in advertising is the rhythm. The effect achieved by using

² Jakštien(2008) page 52

³ Jakštien (2008) Page 53

⁴ Lapsanska (2006) Page 27

⁵ Lapsanska (2006) page 28

such device is that the phrase is catchy and easy to be remembered. In the case where stressed and unstressed syllables are presented in similar patterns the rhythm becomes a metric. Some of these metrical feet are iamb, trochee, dactyl, spondee, pyrrhic and anapest.

Another mnemonic device mentioned by Lapsanska is the alliteration defined as a technique used by the poets – “*a mean by which words are arranged to begin with same letter or consonant.*”⁶ the most influential ones being, *p, b, m, n, t, d, k, g*, because they attract the most attention. Furthermore, she mentions a linguistic device that also contributes to the influence that the language has on the human psychology – assonance. This is a mean by which a vowel harmony is created.

Although the mnemonic devices are known to influence human perception, Lapsanska identifies other factors that contribute to the success of political advertising such as graphic representation. The most important being the unexpected spelling of the words, the ‘higher frequency or lower frequent letters’, the size and the shape of the letters as well as the ‘*Acronyms and initialisms with graphic exploitation*’⁷. Furthermore, she outlines two other details affecting the psychological aspects, transliteration and homophones. The first term is the process of converting foreign words into English once. Homophones are a stylistic device that is described as using words with the same pronunciation however spelled differently.

Other aspects that have to be mentioned are the lexical and morphological, the syntactic and semantic aspects. Since advertisements in general use similar approach to attract customers and voters, the language that is used is analogical. Therefore, same figures of speech are used and same similar tactics applied. However Chesney and Nichols (2012) state that one aspect

⁶ Lapsanska (2006) page 28

⁷ Lapsanska (2006) (page 29)

that differs from commercial advertisement is the negative language used in political advertisements⁸.

There are different political campaigns that use different approach to advertise themselves – some use written texts, speeches, posters, billboards and newspapers. However, their aim is the same- to *'inform and instruct voters'*⁹. From a linguistic point of view, political campaigns are of interest as they show language being used for such a clear and central purpose. There are two types of political campaigns – positive and negative. The positive campaigns are focused on themselves, to show themselves as something new. To the contrary, the negative campaigns are concentrated on making their opponents look worse and pinpoint the downfalls of their opponent (Appendix 1, 2, 3, 5). An example is a poster that was produced in the lead up to the UK 1997 general election. The conservative party portrayed Tony Blair as a demon, by putting across his eyes a black stripe and replacing them with red, devilish ones (Appendix 1).

Political parties have their slogans and logos by which they are recognised easily by the public. The difference between the two terms is that the while logos can be attached to the party's name and even substitute it, the slogan briefly and memorably suggests some specific ideas about the political party and its aim is capture the attention and project a positive image of the party. As an example it can be considered to logo of the Labour party in the United Kingdom where their logo is a rose and the Conservatives have integrated a three into their name.

Different parties use different types of advertisements they can vary from a simple speech to billboards, newspaper articles and radio broadcasts. One of the most visual and influential

⁸ Chesney & Nichols (2012)

⁹Chesney & Nichols (2012) no page number

ways to advertise a political party is billboard posters. What is more this is one of the most effective ways to make the audience notice the party because even though people have the choice to turn off the TV or radio, the one thing that can not be ignored is a billboard with a poster on it. Therefore these types of adverts should be visually appealing and the message that is portrayed should be brief and easily relatable to. A technique that is frequently used is to release a series of posters so that the public become used to a certain format

Scammell and Langer's (2006) overview of political advertising in the UK examines its history, regulatory framework, evolution and trends, and offers an outlook for its future. The political advertising in the UK exists in two very different media environments – it is permitted in newspapers and on billboards but is prohibited on television. Instead of commercial advertising, on TV *“major parties are allocated rationed blocks of free airtime for party political broadcasts (PPBs), which are labeled party election broadcasts (PEBs) during official campaign periods”*¹⁰. Thus the UK media system sits in the middle between the free-market US model and the more heavily regulated environments of Northern Europe. Despite their steadily declining circulation over the last few decades, newspapers are described as an important medium for political influence because of the *“traditionally high absolute circulation numbers in comparison with southern Europe and the US, the freedom to place advertising content, and their tendencies to offer political support to one party or another.”*¹¹

In television, where a balance between commercialism and public service is sought as a general principle, direct political communication has been limited to the above-mentioned PPBs and PEBs which are carefully rationed between the major parties and also provide some exposure to smaller political players. The BBC as the government-funded broadcaster has

¹⁰ Scammell & Langer (2006) page 65

¹¹ Scammell & Langer (2006) page 66

traditionally borne most of the responsibility for delivering the public service element; this burden has diminished with the emergence and growth in the number of channels and their popularity. This development has led, on the one hand, to a greater number of channels where audiences can watch political messages and related news, while on the other hand, the time allocated for political broadcasts on each channel has shrunk considerably. The authors conclude that *“PEBs still remain the most important direct, unedited means of party communication, and all major parties are opposed to paid political advertising on TV.”*¹²

Political Advertising Regulation:

The regulatory environment for political advertising in the UK over the last half-century is said to be centered on the following three main aims: provision of a relatively level playing field for the major parties in their electoral competition, control of the costs of political campaigns, and maintaining a balance between freedom of speech and the preceding two aims. All major parties have consistently supported these three aims and, although the introduction of paid political advertising was thought likely at a number of points over the course of the last few decades, the arrangement of using PPBs and PEBs has endured, and has been protected by law since 1990, with minimum time slots stipulated by a regulator for a number of TV and radio channels to observe.

Scammell & Langer (2006) state, over time, the role of advertising in political campaigns has declined and that nowadays campaigns are structured and executed to capture television news air time. Another important development is the increasing use of business marketing and advertising expertise in the political arena. Print advertising spending has been on the decline, eclipsed by the effort to influence the news agenda, and losing ground even to spending on billboards. The PEBs have also consistently declined in both relative importance in the campaign as a whole and in length. It could not be otherwise, the authors point out, since

¹² Scammell & Langer (2006) page 67

technology has given the audience access to hundreds of channels, and the audience has lost interest in long political broadcasts.¹³

The use of professional advertising agencies also contributed to changing the media content of political campaigns, especially since the cited hiring of Saatchi & Saatchi in 1978. For the first time, political broadcasts started to employ a range of film-production techniques such as the use of actors, music, pre-recorded video-clips, and the overall campaigns became coordinated with messages spread through the different media reinforcing each other. Another notable development is that the party broadcasts abandoned the politician as the main talking point, and generally cut down on the amount of talking and moved towards a non-political language. Further on, the evolution of political broadcasts included the rise of using different genres, producing mini feature films by celebrity directors, using celebrity personalities in the content, resorting to negative messages directly targeted at the main political opponents, to name but a few. Still, in amongst these modern trends, party advertising is claimed by the authors to have maintained a focus on presenting the main political issues of the respective party campaign to the audience.¹⁴

The article concludes by providing an outlook to the future of political advertising in the UK, forecasting that the trends current at the time of writing (2006) are expected to continue. The content is expected to be increasingly centered on the party leader rather than showing different party spokesmen, showing fewer politicians if any, mostly issue-based, and more positive than negative. The party broadcasts are expected to survive and continue to play an important, although diminishing, role, in the foreseeable future, amid increasing competition among different media for the attention of the viewer and the voter.¹⁵

The Language of Political Advertising:

¹³ Scammell & Langer (2006)

¹⁴ Scammell & Langer (2006)

¹⁵ Scammell & Langer (2006)

Lapsanska (2006) the linguistic aspect of the advertisements is the very subject of this extended essay, therefore now some of the most common and used figures of speech will be analysed and supported with examples from the political advertisements released in the United Kingdom. The first important and common morphological aspects are the verbs. They can be imperative, phrasal and auxiliary verbs. Lapsanska argues that “*Two auxiliary verbs often used in advertising are the future auxiliary ‘will’, because it evokes the impression of ‘promise’ and the modal auxiliary ‘can’*”.¹⁶ An example of that is the following manifesto release by the Labour party in 1997 in the United Kingdom ‘*Britain will be better with New Labour*’.¹⁷ The imperative verbs are command verbs used to encourage the audience or the public to do something ‘*Make the difference.*’ – Liberal democrats, 1997.¹⁸

The next common syntactic aspect is the ellipsis. This is a device usually used in the speech that creates a spontaneous conversation with the reader. Usually this makes the message more brief and easy. An example of this is again the 1997 Labour Party release ‘*New life for Britain*’.¹⁹ The deixis is also commonly used in political advertisements. It refers to the usage of the deictic pronouns. The effect that is achieved by introducing such linguistic form is that it makes the reader feel engaged in the event and also it stimulates the thinking process – ‘*It’s up to you. A choice of two futures*’ (Labour Party, 1997)²⁰ and another example is a poster released by the Scottish Labour party (2010) stating ‘*If you don’t stop him no one will*’ (Appendix 5)

Other language figures used are the superlatives and the comparatives. These devices are used to outline or stress on an important message. An example of a superlative forms is introduced in the poster released by the Conservative party in 1959, ‘*Life’s better with the conservatives*’

¹⁶ Lapsanska (2006) page 30

¹⁷ Unknown Author (1997) no page number

¹⁸ Unknown Author (1997) forward Ashdown (1997) page 01

¹⁹ Unknown Author (1997) no page number

²⁰ Unknown Author (1997) no page number

(Appendix 4). Furthermore, it can also be considered a form of parallelism. This is used to refer to a certain point in a text, so a connection is established with another. In political advertisements this is inserted to achieve either a positive image of their own party or to point out the mistakes made by their opponents. To illustrate this it is suitable to use the same example used for the negative campaigns where Tony Blair is illustrated on a poster with demonic eyes (Appendix 1). That way the attention of the person is redirected to the negatives of this party rather than the positives. Underneath the portrait of Tony Blair it is written '*New Labour/ New danger*' (Appendix 1). The parallel here is achieved by the repetition of the word '*new*'. That way the reader creates a parallel between the words '*Labour*' and '*danger*' and helps the electorate to understand the message easier with fewer words. Parallelism is a mean that is not only used in written texts but also it can be achieved by images.

Metaphors are also present in the political advertisements. Lepsanska (2006) describes it as "*very difficult issue to define and there are many ways how to define it*"²¹. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) define metaphor as "*statements and/or pictures which cause a receiver to experience one thing in terms of another.*"²² As an example it can be considered a poster released by the Labour party "*The Tories are on a different planet*"²³. Beard (2000) argues that "*Both metaphor and metonymy are frequently used in the language of politics. They are only one aspect of political discourse, but they are useful starting points for looking at some of the ways in which political language operates.*"²⁴

²¹ Lepsanska (2006) Page 45

²² Lepsanska (2006) page 45

²³ Bennett (2012) no page number

²⁴ Beard (2000) page 19

Lexical and morphological aspect of the political adverts is the intertextuality, which according to Lepsanska is *"the way in which one text echoes or refers to another text"*²⁵. For example it can be considered the political poster from 1992 released by the Labour party that portrayed Norman Lamont as batman and outlined with red capital letters 'VATMAN' (Appendix 3).

There are many constitutions concerning the ethics of advertising. In a journal article written by Brader (2005), he outlines the process of motivating and persuading voters by appealing to emotions, something very common in political adverts. He argues that *"Both psychologists and political scientists recently have claimed that emotions play a fundamental role in reasoning and are as likely to enhance rationality as to subvert it."*²⁶ He also carried out research to establish the extent to which this is true. From his observations he concluded that candidates can influence the population by referring to their emotions. Sometimes that can include even the smallest details such as background music that trigger people's emotions. Brader argues that one of the emotions that are most effective in persuading people to do something is fear. People respond to ads that offer escape from this feeling of vulnerability. To the contrary, he mentions that none of the research made can not answer why this happens or how it accrues. His research is set to show how and if emotions play any role in the motivation and persuasion of people to vote. Brader says that other research argues that people response differently to positive and negative moods. However he concludes that there has not been evidence that can fully support the argument that emotions are influential part of the political advertisement. The study carried by Brader states *"emotions can be central to whether and how campaign ads work"*²⁷. Moreover, his findings show that *"campaign ads can use images and music to manipulate emotions and, in doing so, affect the*

²⁵ Lapsanska (2006) page 32

²⁶ Brader (2005) page 390

²⁷ Brader (2005) page 390

behaviour of voters . Positive ads lead the voters to like the sponsor and negative ads led them to dislike the opponent and emotionally evocative ads ...change the manner in which voters make choices"²⁸ . Brader concludes that the way the message is delivered is as important as to be spread and experiments used to support some of the arguments can not be proven by them.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the language associated with United Kingdom political party advertising uses a range of techniques that specifically uses the versatility of the English language. Throughout the essay the evidence has shown that adverts, especially billboard posters are unique in the world of advertising. Where as mainstream commercial adverts identified the strengths the product or service has to offer, within political advertising many adverts focus for more negatively on competitors and therefore have to use in some cases for more sophisticated and manipulative language in order to scare the consumer (electorate) that their political product is better than any other. This means that the use of the English language has to be clever in the sense that it has to be effectively employed to emphasize the message being put across. The use of language in political adverts is also sophisticated in the case of having to deliver a message that is comprehensive in its message but deliver it in as few words as possible.

Many of the billboard adverts that are in the appendix place much more emphasis on discrediting the opposition that actually delivering a positive message about the worthiness of the political product on offer. Because political parties primary aim is power it has to engage in language that is not available to mainstream commercial advertising. Therefore political parties utilize the full range of the way the English language can be used in order to achieve their ultimate aim which of course is power.

²⁸ Brader (2005) page 390

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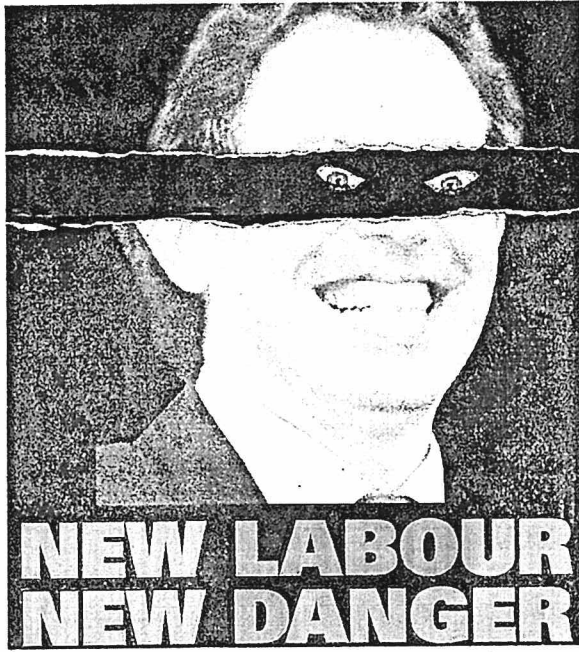
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Appendix:

1



The Tories are on a different planet.




Recession, fare rises, police cuts. Don't let them get away with it. Vote Labour in London on May 3rd.

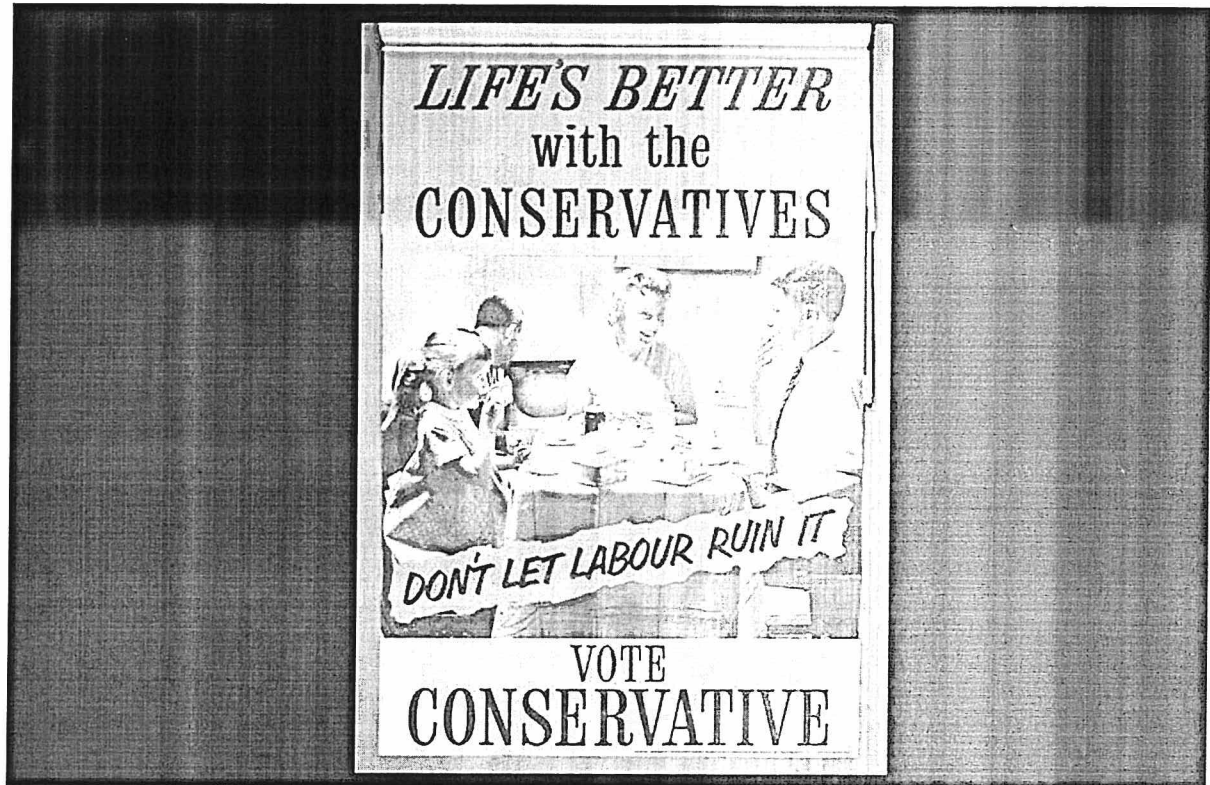




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